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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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23 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Effect on Cuba of a Blockade Covering all Goods
Except Food and Medicines *

1. A blockade excluding all shipments into Cuba except food and medicines would be unlikely, in and of itself, to bring the Castro government down unless it were extended over many months. The imposition of a blockade would confront the regime with formidable problems of management and economic reorganization. The supply of heavy petroleum products, based on current rates of consumption, would last some three to four months; light products, including jet fuel, about two months. The petroleum supply could be stretched out longer if -- as would be likely -- the regime confined its usage largely to emergency power and military requirements. Sugar production could be continued, but industrial production would be sharply reduced, and many manufactured items would soon become unavailable.

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* This memorandum has been coordinated with the representative of the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, and the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency.

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effectiveness of the military forces would gradually be impaired after POL, spare parts, and other essential supplies were cut off. There would be much confusion and disruption of life, but for some months the regime would be likely to be able to prevent economic chaos and meet the basic needs of the population.

2. The general pattern of political alignments would be unlikely to change significantly in response to a blockade at least initially. The opposition would take heart but shepherd its strength for use at the time of an anticipated US invasion. As the Cuban economy ground to a halt, Castro would face formidable organizational and political problems, but, with increased security precautions, would probably be able to stay in control. As the effects of the blockade became increasingly perceptible in the daily life of the population, nationalistic sentiment and anger against the US would tend to balance off encouragement of the opposition and tendencies to lay the blame against Castro. However, if a US blockade were effective and the Soviets either accepted it or failed in attempts to break it, the faith of many Castro supporters in the wisdom of his policies would be severely strained and trouble within the regime would become a significant possibility.

3. In general, the imposition of a US blockade would be likely to stiffen the backs of those who wholeheartedly support Castro and it would arouse the hopes of those who are committed to opposition. Recruits to both political extremes would come from the generally apathetic group in the center. Castro supporters and some of the formerly uncommitted would believe that the US blockade demonstrated the truth of the warnings of hostile US intentions which the regime has been declaiming for months. Those in opposition would interpret US claims and actions as evidence of Castro's having sold out to the Soviets and as giving added reason to expect US intervention.

4. In the final analysis, we believe that the Cuban population would tend to divide between the two extremes. Some oppositionists might initiate revolutionary action in the hopes of precipitating US invasion. Most of the anti-Castroists, however, would, in our opinion, be unlikely to act forcefully against the regime unless they saw evidence on Cuban soil of US action against the regime or unless they concluded from what they knew of the international situation that action on their part would lead quickly and directly to the overthrow of Castro.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

Alex Smith
ALEX SMITH
Acting Chairman